"I"
The Nature of Identity

[How self-centredness arises]
An introductory essay
by Piya Tan ©2005

"A man is like a fraction whose numerator is what he is and whose denominator is what he thinks of himself. The larger the denominator the smaller the fraction." (Leo Tolstoy)[1]

1 Wrong views about self

1.0 WHAT ATTRACTS US TO RELIGION? People turn to religion or feel religious for all sorts of reasons, rightly or wrongly. Often the believers themselves do not why they keep to a certain belief or follow a certain practice. This is because either they are taught not to question (or not too much), or that we are afraid to question, or that we simply do not know what to ask.

In this series of three articles, we will examine three psychological roots of personality and religiosity, namely, delusion and self-notion ("'I': The nature of identity"), hate and other-notion ("'Me': The nature of conceit"), and greed and lack ("'Mine': The nature of craving"). These explorative essays will examine some *root causes* of such questions as:

- Why are many attracted to *big* temples, and *physical* manifestations of religion, such as relics?
- Why do many *blindly* respect or fear external symbols, such as monastic robes, rituals, etc?
- Why do many look up to *religious status,* lineage, academic title, in religion?
- Why are we *attracted* to a certain monk, nun or teacher, and not to others?
- What is it that some *see or think they see* in a religion that attracts them to it?
- What do people really *believe in* or pray for, and whether this is beneficial at all?
- Why do many monastics not keep to their vows and are very *worldly*?
- Why are *local Buddhists*[2] still very dependent on foreign and cultural forms of Buddhism?
- Why is there so much *violence*, hatred and hypocrisy in religion today?
- How much of our religion is really our own *personality* rather than liberating truth?
- Why are more and more non-Buddhists attracted to Buddhism, especially its meditation?

In short, we are attempting to examine a psychopathology of religion (or simply, religious sickness), and suggest some healthy remedies to our religion.

1.1 THREE PERNICIOUS SELF-VIEWS. The Alagaddûpama Sutta (M 22) defines the true nature of the five aggregates in these words:

> "Is what is impermanent, painful, and subject to change, fit to be regarded thus: 'This is mine; this I am; this is my self'?"
>
> "No, venerable sir."[3]
>
> **27** Therefore, bhikshus, any kind of **form** whatsoever—whether past, future or present, internal or external, **[139]** gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near[4]—all forms should be seen as they really are with right wisdom thus:

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[1] In H Eves, *Return to Mathematical Circles*, Boston: Prindle, Weber and Schmidt, 1989.

[2] The context of these papers are Singapore and Malaysia, and may apply to situations elsewhere to "migrant Buddhism."

[3] On this and the following section, KR Norman says: "It is important to note that this answer can only be given by those who know, in advance, that the term *attā* is by definition *nicca* [permanent] and *sukha* [pleasant], and therefore anything which is *anicca* and *dukkha* cannot be *attā.* This gives us a clear indication of the type of *attā* that is being discussed. It is the Upanishadic idea of an *ātman* which is *nitya* and *sukha,* and this is in complete agreement with the fact…that some of the phraseology of the non-Buddhist view which is being rejected has Upanishadic echoes." (Norman 1981:22)

'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.'[5]
Any kind of **feeling** whatsoever…
Any kind of **perception** whatsoever…
Any kind of **formations** whatsoever…
Any kind of **consciousness** whatsoever—whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—all forms should be seen as they really are with right wisdom thus:
'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.' (M 22.26 f/1:138)

The underlined phrases in the above quote refer to the threefold graspings (*ti,vidha gāha*), namely,

"Mine" =	"This is mine"	(*etam mama*)	arises through craving	(*taṇhā,gāha*);
"Me" =	"This I am"	(*eso 'ham asmi*)	arises through conceit	(*māna,gāha*); and
"I" =	"This is my self "	(*eso me attā*)	arises through wrong view	(*diṭṭhi,gāha*)

(Anattā,lakkhaṇa Sutta, S 3:68 = SD 1.2)

1.2 THE THREEFOLD GRASPINGS. These three wrong attitudes concerning the self are also known as the "**latent tendency to 'I'-making, 'mine'-making and conceit**" (*ahaṅ,kāra,mamaṅ,kāra,mānânusaya*).[6] These threefold graspings are the main factors behind conception (M 1) and mental proliferation (M 18). The wrong view of "this is mine" (*etam mama*) arises as a result of grasping through craving (*taṇhā,gāha*), that is, we build up to the false notion that there is something substantial and permanent called a "self," "soul," "identity," etc.

Such a false view is called "**self-identity view**" (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*), which is the first fetter[7] holding us back from stream-winning, that is, the first supramundane step towards awakening.[8] In his *full acceptance or full understanding of impermanence*,[9] the stream-winner breaks the three fetters (*tīṇi saṁyojanāni*):

(1) Self-identity view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*) is not found in him: he has fully abandoned any notion of identifying with the body as "self," except in the conventional sense for the sake of reflection and communication. In other words, he does not see himself as being "embodied" as a permanent entity.

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[4] See **Khandha S** (S 22.48/3:47) = SD 17.1. This "totality formula" classification of the aggregates (see prec n) is explained in detail in **Vibhaṅga** and briefly in **Visuddhimagga**: **"**internal**"** = physical sense-organs; **"**external**"** = physical sense-objects; "gross" = that which impinges (physical internal and external senses, with touch = earth, wind, fire); "subtle" = that which does not impinge (mind, mind-objects, mind-consciousness, and water); "far" = subtle objects ("difficult to penetrate"); "near" = gross objects ("easy to penetrate") (Vbh 1-13; Vism 14.73/450 f; Abhs 6.7). **Gethin:** "Whether or not the details of the Vibhaṅga exposition are accepted as valid for the *nikāyas*, it seems clear that this formula is intended to indicate how each *khandha* is to be seen as a class of states, manifold in nature and displaying a considerable variety and also a certain hierarchy" (1986:41). See Gethin 1986:40 f; Karunadasa 1967:38f; Boisvert 1995:43-48. As regards the terms "internal" (***ajjhatta***) and "external" (***bahiddhā***), it should be noted that they have two applications: (1) the aggregates (*khandhā*) composing a particular "person" are "internal" to them and anything else is "external"; (2) the sense-organs are "internal" and their objects—which may include aspects of the person's own body or mind, which are "internal" in the first sense—are "external." Boisvert (1995: 43, 47), however overlooks these applications.

[5] See **Anatta,lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59.27).

[6] M 22.15, 72.15, 112.11 20; S 2:75, 3:236, 4:41; A 1:132, 133.

[7] There are altogether 10 fetters (*saṁyojana*), namely: (1) Self-identity view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*), (2) persistent doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rules and rites (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*), (4) sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*), (5) repulsion (*paṭigha*), (6) greed for form existence (*rūpa,rāga*), (7) greed for formless existence (*arūpa,rāga*), (8) conceit (*māna*), (9) restlessness (*uddhacca*), (10) ignorance (*avijjā*) (S 5:61, A 5:13, Vbh 377). In some places, no. 5 (*paṭigha*) is replaced by ill will (*vyāpāda*). The first 5 are the lower fetters (*oram,bhāgiya*), and the rest, the higher fetters (*uddham,bhāgiya*). For an explanation of the fetters, see **(Sekha) Uddesa S** (A 4.85) = SD 3.3(2).

[8] There are 3 kinds of stream-winners: the single-seeder (*eka,bījī*), the clan-goer (*kolaṅkola*) and the seven-at-most (*satta-k,khattu,parama*). For details, see "**The Layman and Dhyana**" = SD 8.5(3).

[9] See **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1) = SD 16.7.

(2) Persistent doubt (*vicikicchā*) is not found in him: he has wise faith in the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha: that is, he understands and accepts the possibility of human salvation as exemplified by the Buddha; he understands the four noble truths and the eightfold path as *the* means to spiritual liberation; and he understands that there are those who have attained liberation, namely, the four kinds of saints.[10]

(3) Attachment to rules and rites (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*) is not found in him: he is not superstitious[11] but is spiritually self-reliant, that is, he does not rely for solace or salvation on any external agency (such as God, gods, spirits, etc) and he does not look outside the True Teaching for the cultivation of his moral virtue, mind, wisdom and liberation, and he will never consciously break any of the five precepts (or any other training rule he has taken).

When we hold the view, "This I am" (*eso'ham asmi*), we cling to the notion that there is a substantial or permanent "self," "soul," "identity," etc, that is, a condition of grasping that arises through conceit (*māna,gāha*),[12] that is, a *measuring* of ourself against others.

When we see anything as "This is my self" (*eso me attā*), we cling to a "thing" on account of wrong view (*diṭṭhi,gāha*), that is, we are profoundly *ignorant* of the true nature of existence, namely, that of impermanence, suffering (unsatisfactoriness) and not-self.

1.3 THE AGGREGATES HAVE NO SELF. In **the Nakula,pita Sutta** (S 22.1), Sāriputta instructs Nakula,pitā that the false views regarding the self are overcome by regarding the aggregates as follows:

> Here, householder, the learned noble disciple, who sees the noble ones, skilled in the way of the noble ones, trained in the way of the noble ones, who sees the true persons and is skilled in the way of the true person, trained in the way of the true person,[13]
>
> —does not regard **form** as self, nor self as possessing form, nor form as in self, nor self as in form;
>
> —he does not live obsessed by the notions, 'I am form. Form is mine.'
>
> As he lives not obsessed by these notions, that form changes and alters. With the change and alteration of form, there does not arise in him, sorrow, lamentation, [physical] pain, [mental] displeasure or despair. (S 22.1.17/3:3) = SD 5.4

This reflection similarly applies to the four other aggregates (feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness).

A related teaching says, "All forms,…feelings,…, perceptions,…formations,…consciousnesses should be seen as they really are, with right wisdom thus: '**This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self**.' This means that the five aggregates should not be regarded as the self or as an abiding entity or soul.

All these three conceits can be subsumed as the conceit "I am" (*asmi,māna*). The best way to abandon the conceit "I am" is the perception of impermanence of the five aggregates, as stated in **the Mahā Suññatā Sutta** (M 122), thus:

> When he dwells contemplating rise and fall in these five aggregates of clinging, *the conceit "I am" on account of the five aggregates clinging is abandoned*.
>
> When this is the case, he knows thus:
>
> "The conceit 'I am' on account of the five aggregates of clinging has been abandoned."
>
> In this way, he is fully aware of them. (M 122.17/3:115) = SD 11.4

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[10] The 4 kinds of saints are the stream-winner (*sotāpanna*), the once-returner (*sākadāgāmī*), the non-returner (*anāgāmī*), and the arhat (*arahanta*). See **(Sekha) Uddesa S** (A 4.85) = SD 3.3(2).

[11] To be superstitious here means to attribute one's difficulties and misfortunes to "bad luck" or some external agencies ("others"), instead of learning to calm and focus our mind, and use it to solve the problems, or find better ways of living. Examples of superstitions are resorting to "good luck" or "karma-purifying" ceremonies where some objects from one's workplace or one's personal effects or even finger-nails are blessed!

[12] See **Me: The nature of conceit** = SD 19.2.

[13] This whole section is stock, descriptive of the stream-winner, ie one who has destroyed the three lower fetters of self-identity view, spiritual doubt, and attachment to rules and rituals.

2 Seeking the self

2.1 DESCRIBING THE SELF. An important section of **the Mahā,nidāna Sutta** (D 15) discusses how people try to describe or identify the self.[14] The true nature of reality is best understood by way of understanding existence as a conditioned process. In §§23-24 of the Sutta, the Buddha lists **the different descriptions of the self** (*atta,paññatti*) proposed by speculative thinkers. A speculative person may wrongly think of the self in one of the following four ways:

- having material form and limited,
- having material form and unlimited,
- having immaterial form and limited,
- having immaterial form and unlimited

In every case, the Buddha declares, the one who tries to describe the self

> either describes such a self (as existing only) now,[15] or one describes such a self as one that will be [will arise in the future],[16] or one thinks: 'What is not so, I will fashion it so that it is so.'[17]
>
> (D 15.24/2:64) = SD 5.17

The Dīgha Commentary explains that these self-views can arise either from meditative experiences or from bare reasoning. In terms of meditation, says the Commentary, these wrong views arise from the misinterpretation of the kasiṇa sign (the inwardly visualized image of the meditation object):

- If the sign itself is apprehended as the self, it is conceived as material.
- If the area covered by the sign, or the mental factors covering it, is apprehended, the self will be conceived as immaterial.
- If the sign is unextended (that is, confined to a small area), the self is conceived as limited.
- If the sign is extended as far as visualization will allow, the self will be conceived as infinite.

(DA 2:504)

The root of these conditions is **ignorance**, the absence of true knowledge, the knowledge of the four noble truths. Since nature abhors a vacuum, when this true knowledge is absent, its place is filled with false knowledge or views (*diṭṭhi*). These views are the mental tangles, knots and matting that prevent us from going beyond the cycle of existence.

Although the Sutta mentions such speculations only in terms of the present and the future, in principle, each view can be combined with any of the four basic views mentioned. However, in actuality, notes **Bodhi**,

> there is a tendency for certain of the basic views to combine with one of the temporal views more readily than the other. Thus a description of the self as limited and material will tend to the annihilationist mode, a description of the self as infinite and immaterial will tend to the eternalist mode. (Bodhi, 1984:38 n1)

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[14] D 15.23-32/2:64-68 = SD 5.17, see esp Intro (9).

[15] For example, in the case of a materialist holding an annihilationist view.

[16] *Tattha bhāviṁ vā so rūpiṁ anantaṁ attānaṁ paññapento paññapeti.* For example, in the case of an eternalist or a Creator-God believer.

[17] *Atathaṁ vā pana santaṁ tathattāya upakappessāmi.* Comy glosses *upakappessāmi* as *sampādessāmi,* "I will strive (for)" (DA 2:504). Walshe: "Though it is not so now, I shall acquire it there" (D:W 226). Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi: "That which is not thus, I will convert towards the state of being thus." One possible interpretation is that, for example, an eternalist, thinking that his "soul" is not permanent, hopes for "eternal life" by subscribing to some eternalist belief. For an interpretation of this enigmatic sentence, see Bodhi 1984:38 (Intro). We are reminded of a line from one of Voltaire's poems called "Epistle to the author of the book, The Three Impostors" that translates as: "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him." On this line alone, some have misconstrued Voltaire to be an atheist, but the work actually shows that his criticism was directed more towards the actions of organized religion, rather than the concept of religion itself.

A short passage on the "**non-description of the self**" (D 15.25-26) states that, unlike the speculative theorists, the Buddha's disciples, on the basis of their spiritual attainments or practice, *refrain from describing the self*. The Commentary notes: "They know that the counterpart-sign of the kasiṇa is only a counterpart sign and that the formless aggregates are only formless aggregates" (DA 2:505). That is to say, they only describe the describable, namely, as dependently arisen phenomena that are all impermanent, suffering and not self.

2.2 TWENTY KINDS OF SELF-VIEW. Next, in §27 of **the Mahā,nidāna Sutta** (D 152), the Buddha explains how a **consideration of the self** (*atta,samanupassanā*) can lead to twenty forms of the self-identity view (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*). He selects one aggregate, that of *feeling*, and shows how in four alternative ways it can become a basis for conceiving self: one who recognizes a self either considers feeling as self, or the self as altogether without feeling, or the self as being distinct from feeling but is of the nature to feel (or, subject to feeling).

Human beings are nothing but **the five aggregates**—form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness—and they are all impermanent and conditioned realities. However, as the aggregates are so interconnected and occur in series of faster-than-lightning event-moments, it is difficult for the untrained mind to notice them. This lack of insight (*vipassanā*) leads many to regard one or other of the aggregates as permanent, in fact, as a self or soul.

Such a notion is called a "self-view" (*attānudiṭṭhi*), and the various forms of self-views are here summarized in this table:[18]

	Aggregate	Self-identity views
1	Form	<The aggregate> is the self;
2	Feeling	The self possesses <the aggregate>;
3	Perception	<The aggregate> is in the self; or
4	Formations	The self is in <the aggregate>.
5	Consciousness	

Table 3.2 Self-views regarding the aggregates

The Paṭisambhidā,magga shows how these four basic modes of self-identity view arise in connection with *form* in this manner. We might wrongly think

- that form *is* the self in the way that the flame of a burning oil-lamp is identical to the colour of the flame; or
- that the self possesses or controls form just as a tree possesses a shadow; or
- that form is in self like the scent is in the flower; or
- that the self is in form, as a jewel is in a casket. (Pm 2.50, 74, 77, 90 = 1:143 f)

When these four self-views are applied to the five aggregates, we get a total of *twenty self-identity views*. These twenty kinds of self-identity views (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*) are listed in **the Mahā Puṇṇama Sutta** (M 109)[19] and **the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta** (M 44).[20]

2.3 FEELING AS "SELF." The view that feeling is self is then examined in §§28-29 of **the Mahā,-nidāna** Sutta (D 152). The three kinds of feeling—pleasant, painful and neutral—are found to be distinct and mutually exclusive, experienced only one at a time. Feeling, in other words (like any of the other aggregates) is a succession of distinct states lacking an enduring entity essential to selfhood.

The Buddha then rejects the view of a completely insentient self on the ground that such a self could not even conceive the idea "I am" [§30]. As regards the third view, the Buddha shows how an attempt is

[18] See M 109.10/3:17 = S 22.82 & S 22.82/3:102 = SD 17.11
[19] M 109.10/ 3:17 f = S 22.82 & S 22.82/3:102 = SD 17.11.
[20] M 44.7 f/1:300.

made by speculative thinkers to avoid the faults of the first two position by making the self as being of the nature to feel [§31]. Perhaps the closest historical parallel to this view is the Sāṅkhyā philosophy with its dualism of *puruṣa,* the self as the changeless witness of nature, and *prakṛti,* nature itself, the ever-changing psychophysical field.

The bottom line is that these self-identity views and speculative views in general are the basis of continued mental suffering. This is not to say that that philosophical thinking is totally useless. In spiritual training, clear thinking is useful in bringing one to the level of "philosophical wisdom" (*cintā,mayā paññā*), that is, knowledge arising from one's clear thinking. However, it is only on the level of a direct experience of true reality—attained on the level of "existential wisdom" (*bhāvanā,mayā paññā*)—that we are liberated from suffering. This existential wisdom arises through mindfulness practice or meditation.

3 Latent tendencies

3.1 EMOTION, SENSATION AND FEELING. William S Waldron, a specialist in the Yogācāra school,[21] has written some very useful explanations on the early and classical Buddhist conceptions of consciousness.[22] First of all, it is important to note that, unlike western psychology, which generally regards the cognitive ("knowing") aspects and the affective ("feeling") aspects of our being as separate processes, Buddhist psychology regards the cognitive and the affective *as integrally part of the same mental process*.[23] In fact, what we (in western terms) think of as "knowing" and "feeling" are conflated in such terms as ***paṭisaṁvedeti,*** "he feels, experiences," which is the usual verb in regards to feelings and experiences in general. The point is that *we know from what we feel,* and they are inseparable.

Similarly, western philosophy and psychology are not agreed on what emotion really is.[24] In Buddhist psychology, emotion, sensation, and feeling are all clearly distinguished. **Emotions** are the *reactions that follow feeling,* and which technically are called "formations" (*saṅkhāra*).[25] **Sensation** is simply the response of the sense-faculty to external and internal stimuli (the former referring to physical sensing, the latter to mental sensing). **Feelings** arise as reactions to three kinds of stimuli (that is, sense-objects)—whether they are pleasant, painful, or neutral—resulting in liking, disliking or indifference.

And here lies the rub! Most of our daily pains and lasting conflicts arise from the way we react to things that *we like, don't like, or don't care for*. In an almost simplistic and predictable way, we regard those that arouse pleasure in us as the "loved" or a friend; those that provoke an unpleasant feeling as the "unloved," even as a foe; and those that evoke neutral feeling (that is, "no feeling") we regard them as strangers, or we simply disregard them. In short, we often grade others as being *loved,* or *unloved,* or *unthought of*, that is, as *friend,* or *foe,* or *stranger*.[26]

3.2 LATENT AND MANIFEST. Most of the time, we cannot really help the way we feel or how we react to events that directly affect us. This is because we are dictated by our latent tendencies (*anusaya*). They are negative deeply ingrained emotions that lie dormant in the mind but are easily, often dramatically, activated by external (social or physical) or internal (mental) conditions. Each latent tendency is the predominant condition behind a corresponding manifest conduct (thought, word, or action) (*pariyuṭṭhāna*),[27] which are indicative of mental and emotional turbulence. While these latent tendencies exist, their harmful dispositions lurk as our personality traits. According to Buddhist psychology, they are carried over into future lives, and exist even in newly born infants.[28]

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[21] An important early Indian Mahayana school that arose in the 4th cent BCE.

[22] See esp 1995:203-206 & 2003:36-45, on which this section is based.

[23] There are however insightful scholars like Antonio Damasio who have noted "Descartes' error": see eg Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, reason, and the human brain,* Avon Books, 1994 & also http://serendip.brynmawr.edu/bb/damasio/descartes.html.

[24] Look up "emotion" in any good technical dictionary on philosophy or psychology, or see SD 17.3(1.3).

[25] See ***Vedanā*** = SD 17.3(1).

[26] On love & sex, see ***Vedanā*** = SD 17.2(2). On problem of duality, see **Beyond good and evil** = SD 18.7 (4).

[27] Skt *paryuṭṭhāna*.

[28] They may not yet have the *notions* of sensual lust, etc, but these lies latent in them: **Mahā Māluṅkyā,putta S** (M 64.3/1:433) = SD 21.10.

Indeed, *we are our latent tendencies!* According to **the Aññatara Bhikkhu Sutta 1** (S 22.35), "if you have a latent tendency towards something, then you are *reckoned* in terms of it."[29] In a similar tone, the sutta after it, **the Aññatara Bhikkhu Sutta 2** (S 22.36), says, "if you have a latent tendency towards something, then you are *measured* in terms of it."[30] If we have a latent tendency that is sensual desire, we tend to look for objects that would satisfy our lust (as if that is ever possible): this makes us *lustful.* If we have a latent tendency that is aversion, we would try to avoid objects and situations we regard as unpleasant: this is likely to *upset* us. If we have a latent tendency that is indifference, we would be unresponsive to people and situations that we have little or no regard for: this is likely to make us *unfeeling,* even callous. In this sense, *there is really no person, only feelings*. Since feelings are impermanent, we change condition them to be positive. But first we must know what these latent tendencies really are.

Early Buddhism speaks of *three* latent tendencies (lust, aversion, ignorance)[31] or *seven* (lust, views, aversion, doubt, conceit, craving for existence, and ignorance).[32] **The Sall'atthena Sutta** (S 36.6) explains how the latent tendencies arise:

> And being touched by that painful feeling, he shows aversion towards it. When he shows aversion towards the painful feeling, **the latent tendency of aversion** (*paṭighânusaya*) towards painful feeling lies latent in him.
>
> When touched by a painful feeling, he delights in sensual pleasure.
>
> Why is that so?
>
> Because, bhikshus, the uninstructed ordinary person knows no other escape than through sensual pleasure.[33]
>
> And when he delights in sensual pleasure, **the latent tendency of lust** (*rāgânusaya*) towards pleasant feeling lies latent in him.
>
> He does not understand according to reality the arising, the passing away, the gratification, the danger and the escape with regards to feelings.[34]
>
> Not understanding these things according to reality, **the latent tendency of ignorance** (*avijjā'nusaya*) towards neutral feeling lies latent in him.[35]
>
> If he feels a pleasant feeling, he feels that it is yoked to him. If he feels a painful feeling, he feels that it is yoked to him. If he feels a neutral feeling, he feels that it is yoked to him.
>
> This, bhikshus, is called an uninstructed ordinary person who is yoked to birth, death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair—he is one who is yoked to suffering, I say![36]

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[29] *Yaṁ kho bhikkhu anuseti tena saṅkhaṁ gacchati* (S 22.35.4/3:35).

[30] *Yaṁ kho bhikkhu anuseti tena anumīyati* (S 22.36.4/3:36). See Bodhi S:B 1054 n49.

[31] Eg **(Vedanā) Pahāna S** (S 36.3/4:205 f); **Sall'atthena S** (S 36.6.8/4:208 f) = SD 5.5, or see below here.

[32] Ie *kāma,rāga, paṭigha, diṭṭhi, vicikicchā, māna, bhava,rāga and avijjā,* respectively. See eg **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18.8/1:109 f) = SD 6.14 Intro (5); **(Satta) Anusaya S** (S 45.175/5:60): see below here.

[33] Comy: The escape is mental concentration, the path and the fruit, but he does not know this, knowing only sensual pleasure. (SA 3:77).

[34] Cf **Cūḷa Sīhanāda S** (M 11.7/1:65), where Comy says the arising (*samudaya*) the views of being (*bhava,-diṭṭhi*) and non-being (*vibhava,diṭṭhi*) are due to any of these eight conditions (*attha-ṭ,ṭhāna*): the five aggregates, ignorance, contact, perception, thought, unskilful consideration, evil friends and the voice of another [Pm 1:138]. Their disappearance (*atthaṅgama*) is the path of stream-entry which eradicates all wrong views. Their gratification (*assāda*) may be understood as the satisfaction of psychological need that they provide; their danger (*ādīnava*) is the continual bondage that they entail; the escape (*nissaraṇa*) from them is nirvana (MA 2:11). See also **Chachakka S** (M 148) where the latent tendencies are explained in connection with each of the 6 senses (M 148.28-33/3:285).

[35] The most important characteristic of neutral feelings to note is their impermanent nature (It 47). This is because a neutral feeling appears to be the most stable of the three types of feeling. When they are noted as impermanent, it will lead to the arising of wisdom, thereby countering the latent tendency of ignorance. See §3n. See Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization,* 2003:171.

[36] **Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya S** (M 38) closes broadly explaining how an unawakened person delights all kinds of feelings—whether pleasant, painful or neutral—"he delights in that feeling, welcomes it, and remains clinging to it."

(S 36.6.8/4:208 f) = SD 5.5

In simple terms, *we perceive or define what is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral*, and react accordingly. Every time we react with lust (negative desire), or with aversion, or even if we ignore what we do not care for, we reinforce that habit, meaning that we are more likely to repeat this reaction the next time we perceive in a similar manner. Very often, our lives are simply *reactive*, going on autopilot in this manner. The aim of Buddhist training is to break this reactive cycle and gain self-control. In this connection, **the (Satta) Anusaya Sutta** (S 36.3) admonishes the following:

3.3
(Satta) Anusaya Sutta
The Discourse on the (Seven) Latent Tendencies
[The noble eightfold path overcomes the latent tendencies]
(S 45.175/5:60)

Bhikshus, there are these seven latent tendencies. What are the seven?

(1) The latent tendency that is sensual lust	*kāma,rāgânusaya*;
(2) The latent tendency that is aversion	*paṭighânusaya*;
(3) The latent tendency that are views	*diṭṭhânusaya*;
(4) The latent tendency that is doubt	*vicikicchā'nusaya*;
(5) The latent tendency that is conceit	*mānânusaya*;
(6) The latent tendency that is desire for existence	*bhava,rāgânusaya*;
(7) The latent tendency that is ignorance	*avijjā'nusaya*.

These, bhikshus, are the seven latent tendencies.
This noble eightfold path, bhikshus, is to be cultivated
for direct knowledge,
for the full understanding,
for the utter destruction,
for the abandoning, of the latent tendencies.

— evaṁ —

4 Mental proliferation

4.1 How the mind proliferates. According to **the Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta** (M 18),[37] the latent tendencies [3] lead to "apperception-based proliferation" (*papañca,saññā,saṅkhā*),[38] or more simply, "mental proliferations." ***Papañca*** is the mind's proclivity for inner chatter and commentary regarding any experience, mentally projected narratives and issues dictated by one's biases, repressions and past experiences. Basically, it is our past, habitually encroaching upon us so that we tend to lose touch with the present moment. We are, as such, living in our own self-created virtual world of past demons and mental projections.

In the Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta, **Mahā Kaccāna** explains in some detail as to how mental proliferation arises:

It also describes a Buddha responds to these feelings (M 38.30-41/ 1:266-271). See Intro above & also **Cūḷa,vedalla S** (M 44.25-28/1:303 f). For 7 latent tendencies, see **(Vedanā) Pahāna S** (S 36.3/4:205 f).

[37] M 18.8/1:109 f = SD 6.14.

[38] See SD 6.14 Intro (3) & also ***Saññā*** = SD 17.4(7.3) & (8.4).

> Friends, dependent on the eye and form, eye-consciousness arises. **The meeting of the three is contact.**[39] With contact as condition, there is feeling.
>
> What one feels, one perceives.
>
> What one perceives, one thinks about.[40]
>
> What one thinks about, one mentally proliferates.[41]
>
> What a person mentally proliferates is the source through which *apperception-based proliferation*[42] impacts one regarding past, future and present forms cognizable through the eye.[43]
>
> ⟨The same is repeated for the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, the mind, and their respective objects and consciousnesses.⟩ (M 18.16/1:111 f = SD 6.14)

The Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta continues, saying that "if one were to find nothing there to delight in, nothing there to welcome, nothing to cling to"—that is, if we simply disregard our negative thoughts, or wisely attend to them as they really are, in a non-reactive way—they will not be fuelled further, and so will end. The best way of overcoming negative emotions is to constantly regard them as "impermanent," *letting them come, and letting them go, but not letting them stay*.

4.2 MENTAL PROLIFERATION AND LANGUAGE. Mental proliferations arise because of latent tendencies, that is, negative habitual karmic potentials stored deep in our minds [3]. Another way of explaining why the mind proliferates itself is by describing the cognitive process, or more technically, how the mind-door cognitive process occurs.[44] This process is interesting in that it also explains how the notion "I am" or self-identity arises. The short answer, as such, is that *the mind proliferates because of our self-notion*.

WS Waldron, a Buddhist psychology specialist, has noted that

> The sense 'I am' is closely connected with the reflexivity of mental cognitive awareness (*mano-viññāṇa*), the only cognitive modality not directly based upon one of the sense faculties but upon the faculty of mind or mentation (*mano*)."[45] (2003:37)

Waldron's statement relates to the fact that there are essentially two kinds of cognitive processes: *the five-door cognitive process* (the mind processing physical sense-data) and *the mind-door cognitive process* (the mind processing mental data).[46]

After a physical sense-door process (say, an act of seeing), many *bhavaṅga* (life-continuum) moments arise, followed by a mind-door cognitive process that takes the same sense-object (that is, the visible object), *but that has already ceased,* that is, a past object. In other words, we are merely attending to a memory![47]

In due course, long after the actual events are over, the mind continues to recall their traces or images of the past, re-projecting them into a growing virtual reality in the mind. This is the mind's "own" object (*dhamma*), associated with thinking and pondering (*vitakka,vicāra*). They are both speech-formations (*vitakka,vicārā vacī,saṅkhārā*),[48] and they arise in connection with *mano* (mentation).[49] As such, Waldron notes further:

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[39] *Tiṇṇaṁ saṅgati phasso.* For a discussion on this passage, see Bucknell 1999:318 ff.

[40] "One thinks about," *vitakketi.* On how when thinking stops, desires do not arise, see **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21.2.2/2:277).

[41] This verse up to here is also found in **(Samuday'atthaṅgama) Loka S** (S 12.44/2:71-73 = SD 7.5) and **(Sabb'upādāna) Pariññā S** (S 35.60/4:32 f = SD 6.17) in different contexts.

[42] *Papañca,saññā,saṅkhā,* see SD 6.14 Intro (3).

[43] This important passage is the earliest statement on the Buddhist theory of perception. See Introd (4).

[44] The *mechanics* of the mind-door cognitive process is discussed in **Nimitta and Anuvyañjana** = SD 19.14 esp (3). He we shall look at the *dynamics* of the process.

[45] On *mano,* see ***Viññāṇa*** = SD 17.81(12).

[46] The ensuing discussion assumes you know the basic difference between the mind-door and the five-door cognitive processes: otherwise, now turn to SD 19.14(3), and then return here to continue.

[47] For details, see ***Nimitta* and *anuvyañjana*** = SD 19.4(3).

[48] **Cūḷa,vedalla S** (M 44.15/1:301).

The reflexivity that mental cognitive awareness provides, based on such mentation (*mano*), is thus bound up with our capacities for language, which was considered in early Indian thinking, as elsewhere, as the very medium of thought and ideas.[50]

Like language itself, however, the awareness invites endless rounds of recursivity, of *papañca,* mental or conceptual proliferation—even in regards to objects of sensory awareness:

[Waldron goes on to quote **M 18.16** mentioned above (4.1).]

… Cognitive awareness, language, and thought are thus so inseparable that they give rise to a runaway recursivity in their own right. Indeed, conceptual proliferation itself is so multiply entangled in its own reciprocal relationship—

(1) with contact (which sometimes conditions the arising of cognitive awareness;[51]
(2) with apperception (which always accompanies it);[52] and
(3) with thought itself[53]

—that it is often a synonym for phenomenal, cyclic existence as a whole.[54] (Waldron 2003:37 f)

The threefold training of the practitioner begins with moral virtue which *ensures that our bodily acts and words do not proliferate into cyclic thoughts*. This prepares our mind for inner calm and clarity, and with the overcoming of mental proliferation, even if temporary, we experience dhyanic bliss. With such a calm mind, we easily cultivate the direct knowledge into the true nature of things. With that, mental proliferation is totally overcome, so that we are liberated from suffering. In this connection, this teaching is given in **the Tuvaṭaka Sutta** (Sn 4.14):

Pucchāmi taṁ adicca,bandhuṁ	I ask you, Kinsman of the Sun,
vivekaṁ santi,padaṁ ca mahesiṁ	great sage, regarding the seclusion and state of peace,
kathaṁ disvā nibbati bhikkhu	seeing in what way does a monk become cool,
anupādiyāno lokasmiṁ kiñci	not grasping at anything in the world? (Sn 915)
	[The Blessed One:]
Mūlaṁ papañca,saṅkhāyā (ti Bhagavā)	The root of what is reckoned as proliferation,
mantā asmî ti sabbaṁ uparundhe	the thought "I am," all he would put to a stop.
yā kāci taṇhā ajjhattaṁ	Whatever cravings there are in him,
tāsaṁ vinayā sadā sato sikkhe	Always mindful, let him train to push them away. (Sn 916)

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[49] **Pasūra S** (Sn 4.8) eg speaks of "thinking over views in the mind" (*manasā diṭṭhi,gatāni cintayanto*, Sn 834) & **Sūci,loma S** (S 808*) mentions "the mind's thoughts" (*mano,vitakkā*) (S 10.3/1:207). See Johansson 1965:183, 186.

[50] N Ross Reat: "Language was thought of as a discovery of the inherent conceptual relationships among things, so that from a very early period in Indian thought, conceptualization was regarded primarily as a verbal phenomena" (1990:305). [Waldron's fn]. See also **Language & Discourse** = SD 26.11.

[51] **(Cha Phass'āyatana) Koṭṭhita S** (A 4.174): "Whatever is the range of the six spheres of contact, that itself is the range of mental proliferation. And whatever is the range of mental proliferation, that itself is the range of the six spheres of contact." (A 4.174/2:161). See Ñāṇananda 1976:21. [This & foll 3 nn are Waldron's but are here revised.]

[52] **Kalaha,vivāda S** (S 4.11): "what is reckoned as 'proliferation' has perception as its source" (*saññā,nidānā hi papañca,saṅkhā*): see SD 6.14 Intro (3); **Saṅgayha S** (S 35.94): "People here and there of proliferated perception, | when perceiving, go on to become the tools of proliferation" (S 35.94/4:71). See Johnson 1979:192 f.

[53] Ñāṇananda: "The word or concept grasped as an object of ratiocination, is itself a product of *papañca.* This, in its turn breeds more of its kind when one proceeds to indulge in conceptual proliferation (*papañca*). Concept characterised by the proliferating tendency (*papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*) constitute the raw-material for the process and the end product is much the same in kind though with this difference that its has greater potency to obsess, bewilder and overwhelm the world. Thus there is a curious reciprocity between *vitakka* [thought] and *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*—a kind of vicious circle, as it were. Given *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*, there comes to be *vitakka* and given *vitakka* there arise more *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā.* [M 1:145]." (1971:23 = 1976:25).

[54] For a lengthy discussion, see Schmithausen 1987:509 ff, n1405, 522 ff, n1425. [Waldron's fn]

4.3 SELF-IDENTITY VIEW. The mind-door cognitive process, as already mentioned, brings experiences of the physical senses into consciousness, and the mind itself processes its own sense-data by way of the mind-door cognitive process.[55] In other words, *the mind-door process is a reflexive one*. This cognitive reflexivity and the cyclic recursivity (repetitiveness) of the mental proliferation together conjure up a false notion of a permanent self.

Or, in a more colourful way of saying it: the self-processing nature of our mind misleads us into thinking that there is an "I" to think. I think therefore "I" exist: this is *the classic Cartesian error*. The repetitive and predictable reactions of our mind to internal and external stimuli mislead us to into affirming the notion of an abiding self, that it must truly exist since we keep experiencing the same and familiar things over and again.

Mental proliferation works in a vicious cycle of self-generation, fuelled by our reflexive sense of self-existence. **The Yava,kalāpī Sutta** (S 35.248) declares the following conceivings (*mañña*)[56] to be mental proliferations, namely:

(1) "I am"	is a mental proliferation;
(2) "I am this"	is a mental proliferation;
(3) "I shall be"	is a mental proliferation;
(4) "I shall not be"	is a mental proliferation;
(5) "I shall consist of form"	is a mental proliferation;
(6) "I shall be formless"	is a mental proliferation;
(7) "I shall percipient"	is a mental proliferation;
(8) "I shall be non-percipient"	is a mental proliferation;
(9) "I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient"	is a mental proliferation.

(S 35.248/4:202 f)[57]

The notion (1) "**I am**" (*asmî ti*) refers to a reflexive view, rooted in craving (*taṇhā*), that the conscious body or an aspect of it (one of the five aggregates or a part of it) is the self.

The notion (2) "**I am this**" (*ayaṁ aham asmî ti*) is rooted in view (*diṭṭhi*), resulting in the conceit (*māna*), measuring oneself against others as "I am better than" (superiority complex) or "I am worse than" (inferiority complex), and "I am as good as" (equality complex).

The notion (3) "**I shall be**" (*bhavissan ti*) is a wishful thinking rooted in one of the unwholesome roots (greed, hate or delusion). More technically, it is a manifestation of an eternalist view (*sassata,diṭṭhi*).

Its opposite is the notion (4) "**I shall not be**" (*na bhavissan ti*) may be either a fear of loss or deprivation (such as "I will no more be powerful, or famous, or rich, etc"), or a desire (such as "I will no more be powerless, or obscure, or poor, etc"). On a deeper level, it is a manifestation of an annihilationist view (*uccheda,diṭṭhi*), that with death everything ends.

The rest, notions (5-9), are specific types of eternalism. Notion (5) "**I shall consist of form**" (*rūpī bhavissan ti*) means "I shall attain dhyana" (or more specifically, "I shall attain the form dhyana"), or "I shall be reborn in a form realm." Notion (6) "**I shall be formless**" (*arūpī bhavissan ti*) means "I shall attain the formless dhyana," or "I shall be reborn in a formless realm."

Notion (7) "**I shall be percipient**" (*saññī bhavissan ti*) is usually rooted in the fear of losing our conscious state, or the desire to avoid rebirth amongst the non-percipient beings (*asañña,sattā*) (a fourth-dhyana level realm). Or, it could simply be a pervading desire to exist on some conscious level of being, usually in terms of high meditation attainments. On the other hand, there are those who may be attracted to the non-percipient realm: (8) "**I shall be non-percipient**" (*asaññī bhavissan ti*).

The last notion, (9) "**I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient**" (*n'eva,saññi,nâsaññī bhavissan ti*), is an eternalist desire to attain the highest meditative state possible, "outside" of nirvana.

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[55] See SD 19.14(3) = SD 40a.3.

[56] The term *mañña* (sg) or *maññanā* (pl) is not found in the Suttas, found only in the Niddesa. The early canonical form is the participle form usually *mannita* (that which is conceived).

[57] These 9 conceivings are also mentioned in **Dhātu Vibhaṅga S** (M 140.31/3:246) = SD 4.17 & **Samanupassanā Sutta** (S 22.47/3:47) = SD 26.12.

All such conceivings bring suffering upon one: they are "a disease,…a tumour,…a dart," and we should train ourselves to dwell with a mind free of them.[58]

On a simpler, but no less insightful, level, we can feel the essence of this teaching in a quote attributed to the Catalan-Danish writer and diarist, Anaïs Nin:

> We see the world as "we" are, not as "it" is; because it is the "I" behind the "eye" that does the seeing. (Anaïs Nin, 1903-1977)

5 Tribalism

A very pernicious form of self-identity view, commonly found in human societies and institutions, is **tribalism.** Many religions, especially the theistic ones, have their roots in tribal societies. The major theistic religions—such as the Abrahamic religions—arose during troubled times in the Middle East. These religions' ancient canons (and their recent revised versions) advocate the traditional tribal or "community" ethics.[59] Tribal loyalty is indoctrinated into tribal members right from the cradle, and as such they remain profoundly conditioned and communal in their thinking and behaviour. While preaching altruism towards tribal members—those who profess the same faith and sectarian loyalty—their ethic, however, allows retribution, often in terrible forms, against non-tribesmen based on the notion that *those who are not with them are against them*, and those who are perceived as being against the tribe, too, are similarly judged.

In his *Los Angeles Times* article on tribalism, the political scientist **David Ronfeldt** makes the following observations:

> A tribe may see a deity as the ultimate ancestor of its identity. Its religion may also tell tribal members how to uphold society and treat one another. It does not determine how they may behave towards outsiders, but religion often supplies the justification.
>
> ...Even modern societies without well-defined tribes and clans still have tribe-like sensibilities at their core, variously expressed in nationalism, cultural festivities, civic interest groups, sports and fan clubs.
>
> But tribalism can make for a mean spirited partiality. Tribes and clans are terribly sensitive to boundaries and barriers, about who is a tribal member and who isn't. As such, a tribe can be a realm of virtue in which reciprocal altruism rules kin relations. But this virtuous behaviour, in tribal logic, need not extend to outsiders—they can be treated differently, especially if they are "different."
>
> In general, the more a religion calls for kinship among all peoples, the more it may lead to ecumenical caring (as Islam often does). Further, tribes open to more than one faith may be less susceptible to sectarian appeals. For example, Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's tribe contains both Sunnis and Shiites.

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[58] S 35.248/4:202 f. On eternalism and nihilism, see SD 19.3(2.2).

[59] Cf the biblical parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), told by Christ when a lawyer asked him to define "neighbour." A man is attacked, robbed and left to die by the roadside between Jericho and Jerusalem. A Kohen (Jewish priest) and Levite (a high-class Jew) see him but do nothing fearing ritual pollution as he is dying. A Samaritan (a Jew-hater; orig this third person was prob an ordinary Jew) immediately gives him first aid, takes him to an inn to recover, and pays the inn-keeper two silver pieces (an entire day's wages for an ordinary worker). The true neighbour here is of course the Samaritan. The orig audience of the parable was of course the Jews, who were given a lesson in non-discrimination and interracial harmony. The point of the parable is that the oneness of humanity transcends social and other differences. As Buddhists, this reminds us of the true purpose of renunciation, ie, a renunciant does not actually forsake the biological family, but by joining the universal Sangha, extends his or her kinship unconditionally not only to embrace all humans, but also *all beings.* As such, we can approach any monk or any nun (and by extension, any Buddhist worker), for spiritual counsel or succour just as we would a close loving relative. In Western cultures, a Samaritan is a term for a generous person who is ready to help those in distress without hesitation. For refs, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_Samaritan.

> But the more a religion's adherents demonize others, revel in codes of revenge for alleged wrongs and crave territorial and spiritual conquests, all the while claiming to act on behalf of their deity, the more their religious orientation is utterly tribal and prone to rationalizing violence of the darkest kind.
>
> All religious hatred—whether Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu or other—speaks the language of tribe and clan. And in true tribal fashion, that language is loaded with sensitivities about respect, honor and dignity. An insult or injury to any of these is sensed by all tribal members, and the only honorable recourse is full compensation or total revenge. This is an essential ethic of tribes and clans, no matter their religion. (D Ronfeldt 2004)

6 Buddhist tribalism

6.1 IDENTITY THROUGH LINEAGE. Buddhism is the world's first missionary religion. During Asoka's time, during the 3rd century BCE, Buddhism had spread all over the ancient world, and today is a global religion. In ancient India, Buddhism grew socially through royal patronage and the support of the merchant class. Similarly, outside India, Buddhism continues to grow with the patronage of the powerful, the rich and the learned.

A missionary religion is, in a broad sense, a corporation that successfully markets itself. Successful marketing has much to do with a well-known label and with the products. Sectarianism is the *labelling* of religious group, while reputation has to do with the group's authenticity or legitimization, which as a rule is the validity of *the ordination or religious lineage* of the group members. A third characteristic of successful marketing is packaging—the appearance and titling of its salespersons (commonly found in business cards): in religion, this is invested in the physical appearance of the group members (eg monastic robes, religious paraphernalia, etc) and ecclesiastical titles (eg Mahanayaka, Chief High Priest, etc). We will discuss how this works as **memes** in propagating the group and its ideas elsewhere,[60] and here will only focus on how Buddhist groups legitimize themselves.

There are **two extreme views regarding ordination lineage**: the first is that it has to be totally pure (like that of a brahminical lineage), and the second is that of a self-initiated cult lineage. The first, the notion of *an unbroken lineage of teachers going right back to the Buddha himself* is a universal **Chan** tradition.[61] Unlike the other major schools of East Asian Buddhism that legitimizes their existence and teachings by centering themselves around a particular Mahāyāna text, the Chan tradition, in rejecting the scriptures as final authority,[62] had to resort to other means of legimitization of its authenticity, that is, the lineage of patriarchs.[63] Chan as such became one of the most traditional of Buddhist schools.

On the other extreme, a profound sense of self-identity could induce us to "imitate" the Buddha (in the power mode, that is), so that we could self-initiate ourselves and found a new religious order in the Buddha's name. Such apparently was the case of the English guru, DPE Lingwood, who went by the religious name of Sangharakshita (later Urgyen Sangharakshita).

In "Was the Buddha a Bhikkhu?"[64] Sangharakshita aggressively attacked the Theravada Buddhist order (in particular on Brahmavamso, a pupil of Ajahn Chah of the Thai forest tradition, and who, on the basis of his extensive knowledge of Vinaya, proved that Sangharakshita actually had received *a valid ordination*, albeit for a short period of time).[65] Sangharakshita attempted to prove that the Buddha himself did not receive an ordination and was therefore of the same non-ordained status as himself! However,

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[60] See **Memes** = SD 26.3.

[61] Chinese *Chan* 禪; Korean *Seon* (simplified *Sōn*), 선; Japanese *Zen*, 禅; Vietnamese, *Thi'ên*.

[62] Suzuki humorously observes: "Zen claims to be 'a specific transmission outside the scripture and to be altogether independent of verbalism,' but it is Zen masters who are the most talkative and most addicted to writing of all sorts." (Introd to Zenkei Shibayama's *A Flower Does Not Talk,* Rutland, VT: Tuttle, 1971:9)

[63] For further discussion, see **The taming of the bull** = SD 8.2, esp (8).

[64] *Was the Buddha a Bhikkhu? A Rejoinder to a Reply to "Forty Three Years Ago."* London: Windhorse Publications, 1995.

[65] On Brahmavamso's stand on sexuality and monkhood, see "Buddhist sexual ethics—a rejoinder" by Ajahn Brahmavaṁso & Ajahn Ñāṇadhammo: http://www.buddhanet.net/rejoiner.htm.

while the Buddha had lived celibately throughout his monastic life, Sangharakshita clearly had not, despite his claims to the contrary.[66] Sangharakshita tried to circumvent this massive discrepancy by referring to the bhikkhu ordination as "in the technical Vinaya sense," which is effectively a catchphrase in his writings.[67]

> The use of this terminology implies that it is possible to be a bhikkhu in some other way than the "technical Vinaya sense." This is akin to claiming that it is possible to be a nun, for instance, without wearing nun's robes, keeping nun's vows or living in a nunnery. As is obvious, any woman who does not keep such vows, wear such robes, or live in such an establishment is what the overwhelming majority of sane human beings would recognize as a layperson. Similarly, any form of bhikkhu who does not uphold the Vinaya, is simply not a bhikkhu, since living within the confines of the Vinaya and the title "bhikkhu" are actually synonymous. Perhaps now Sangharakshita will begin to speak of young women becoming pregnant other than "in the technical sense" or elephants other than those in the "large grey quadrupeds with tusks, trunks and large floppy ears sense." (Arthur Rimbaud, http://www.ex-cult.org/fwbo/fwbofiles.htm)

On a happier note, there is a middle way out of and beyond both these extreme views. **Somdet Ñāṇasaṁvara** (Suvaḍḍhana Mahāthera), the 19th Supreme Patriarch of the Thai Buddhist Order, in his *Buddha Sāsana Vaṁsa,* notes:[68]

> From the Buddha's Mahāparinibbāna until the present, more than 2000 years have passed, thus it is difficult to know whether the pure lineage has come down to us intact or not. (16)
>
> If the lineage has faded away it is in no way harmful, just like Pukkusāti's[69] dedication to homelessness was harmless. (18)
>
> [The lineages entered Thailand] many times through many periods…as Buddhism entered the country in different periods, sects, and forms, it is difficult to know how they merged and how they declined. (76) (Ñāṇasaṁvara 1974:16, 18, 76)

> So while there sometimes appear to be an almost mystical belief in the inviolability of ordination lineages, saner voices are still to be found. No monk alive can guarantee his own ordination lineage. In this situation *it is safer and more reasonable to focus on the way the holy life is lived* rather than on unverifiable claims on a largely undocumented past.
>
> (Sujato 1006b:64; emphasis added)[70]

6.2 THE LABEL IS NOT THE SOUP. In traditional Buddhism, especially systems based on Indian Buddhism, the community is generally divided into the ordained (monks, nuns, and novices) and the lay. The true difference between the two is that of *commitment* to the spiritual training. The ordained monastics, as a rule, have renounced the world to live a simple life of economic insecurity[71] but spiritual security with spiritual liberation in this life as its goal. The laity, on the other hand, generally comprises those who are economically secure or earn a suitable living to support themselves, and with some surplus income and free time, they are able to provide the basic needs (almsfood, robes, shelter and medical care) for the renunciants.

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[66] See eg http://www.ex-cult.org/fwbo/fwbofiles.htm.

[67] See also eg *Forty-Three Years Ago: Reflections on my Bhikkhu Ordination*, London: Windhorse Publications, 1993.

[68] Qu by Sujato 1006b:63 f.

[69] **Dhātu,vibhaṅga S** (M 140) records how Pukkusāti went forth out of faith before formally receiving ordination, M 140/3:237-247 = SD 4.17. Ñāṇasaṁvara also mentions the going forth of Mahā Pajāpatī, traditionally said to be the first nun, as a worthy precedent in this context (based on Sujato's fn).

[70] On "Ordination lineage," see Piya Tan, *History of Buddhism,* 2004: ch 8. See also "Was the Buddha a Monk" = SD 30.12.

[71] On the monastics' not handling money, see **Money and Monastics** = SD 4.19.

However, when materialism has the upper hand in a community, there is a tendency to *commodify*[72] almost everything, including monastics, especially those perceived as being advanced in the Dharma and in meditation. When such monastics give public teachings, the halls are crowded, but one wonders how many people really benefit. Of course, it is not the speaker's fault that he or she attracts such a believing but unthinking crowd. (The crowd never thinks; only individuals can think.) My point is that insofar as the "crowd" devotee places the teacher above the teaching, the devotee is unlikely to spiritually benefit from such an encounter. It becomes nothing more than collecting religious autographs and priding them off to others. Or perhaps we think that we could be miraculously healed of our problem simply by listening without making any effort at mindfulness training, without understanding our own mind, training it and freeing it. But the point is such a crowd follower is like a tenant living in a luxurious penthouse while the building below is burning away.

When we merely worship, or *fear* the sacred, or *collect* religious symbols (like relics and images), we not only forget their true meanings (wishfully or unconsciously we are collecting "power"), but we have effectively externalized our locus of spiritual control. We are not only living in the past, but also merely giving lip-service to the true liberating potential of the Buddha's Teaching. We have taken refuge in worldly things, instead of taking refuge in the Dharma through self-effort. Indeed, we have become hero-worshippers, idol-worshippers and cult members, caught in the mindset of identifying with things, of attachment to rituals and blessings, and of self-doubt and disempowerment. We are only looking at soup labels and stocking cans of them without ever opening or tasting them.[73] That is why we are always hungry for more religious fixes: Buddhism has become a drug. The point is that monastic robes, monastic life-style, even the Dharma, are reminders for both the monastics and the lay of *the urgency for mindfulness training and working out our salvation here and now*.

6.3 SELLING THE DHARMA. As a religion, Buddhism has influenced many cultures, but has in turn been influenced by these cultures to form *new Buddhist religions and systems*, many of which radically depart from the early Buddhist teachings. The world today, our own country and community, are in many ways different from the Buddha's time. Our local ways are also very different from those of ancient and modern Buddhist Sri Lanka, or Myanmar, or Thailand, or any other south-east Asian Buddhist community. Due to such differences that keep growing down the ages, and into the future, we can expect more changes to how people perceive Buddhism. As new Buddhist religions and sects grow, each group has to employ competitively attractive and economically lucrative ways of gaining the Buddhist market. In highly urbanized Singapore, for example, *social work* is a very common means of not only raising huge funds for various parochial projects, but also of building charisma, which again is useful in commanding supporters from amongst the affluent and powerful, and attracting capable volunteers for such veritably corporate structures and activities.

If we consciously or unconsciously see society as a lucrative market and Buddhism as a corporate means of winning the market share, then we will inevitably be ruled by corporate thinking, of measuring people, of prioritizing the merits of material and worldly gains. Under such circumstances, the waters on which we propel our separate boats may deceptively be calm. The calmness is only a veneer on which we float comfortably, so that we can pursue our private businesses and enterprises undisturbed below deck. But our boats are set on autopilot to remain in the sea of samsara, heading into certain storms, instead of coursing for the horizon of nirvana. Real Buddhist work does not involve grand external displays, but consists <u>in inspiring others to work for their own liberation</u> through the personal example of our own still minds. Then, even our mere presence brings solace upon others, inspiring them to walk the same path of awakening.

Dharma-centred social work may be inspired by a monastic, but it should be managed, not by a monastic, but <u>by experienced and Dharma-moved lay-people</u>. Such organized work involves money and mundane activities (such as fund-raising), activities best left to the laity. From our recent track record, we find, as a rule, that whenever monastics involve themselves in such activities, they tend to neglect their

[72] Here, to *commodify* means to regard something as a desirable *object*, even putting a price on it.
[73] See Dh 64 f.

spiritual cultivation, or worse, violate the holy life.[74] When monastics remain above the world, they are in a better position to give good counsel to the laity working in the world.

If we are not yet well-trained, we will not be effective in helping others (Dh 166). Only when we are ourselves spiritually well-disciplined, can we wisely help others without defiling ourselves (Dh 158).

6.3 FAKE MONKS AND NUNS. An important lesson should be learned from the history of Buddhism (indeed of all world religions) as it spreads in India and beyond. The pattern was predictable: in the centuries after Buddhism had established itself in a region, *its monasteries became treasure-houses* and its inhabitants millionaires, especially with the patronage of royalty and the wealthy. Understandably, with the downfall of the patronizing dynasties, these Buddhist treasure-houses also fell, and were often happily destroyed by envious rival religious or political factions that had come into power.

Even while these monastic treasure-houses thrived, they were (especially in east Asia) the targets of robbers, brigands, and various jealous factions, who robbed or even destroyed them. The monasteries also had to protect themselves in the face of wars and foreign invasions. Out of such circumstances grew the east Asian traditions of *martial arts*.[75] Similarly, during the 12th and early 13th century, when the Muslim Turkish and Afghan marauders invaded India, one of their main targets was the wealthy Buddhist monasteries of India, so that they had enough booty to share amongst themselves, build a new empire, and spread the faith, all in one fell swoop.[76] The perception that *Buddhism attracts wealth* is still common today.

The Sunday Times (a Singapore weekly) dated 8 July 2007 featured a brilliant example of investigative journalism in exposing fake monks and nuns infesting Singapore's heartland over the years. The men who dressed themselves in robes and the women in white came from the poor areas of Thailand and worked for syndicates, preying on the piety, gullibility and superstition of the heartland locals.[77]

The fake monks have been successful in preying on the piety of the religious because they tend to identify *external forms* (shaven head, monastic robes, white dress, alms-bowl, etc) with holiness. When we externalize holiness, purity and wisdom, and fail to look for them within ourselves, we become gullible and easily manipulated by others. It is as if we hand over our remote control to others, and they are clicking it making us think and do things as they wish, without our benefitting from this in any way. We also give Buddhism a very bad name.

The local newspapers have exposed the *false* "fake monks," but the *real* "fake monks" remain. They are those who bear all the credentials of a traditionally ordained monastic, but sadly do not keep to the Vinaya rules nor practise the True Dharma. They think the monastic rules are outdated, and bend the rules the way they deem fit, cleverly rationalizing their actions. The point is that they have bent the rules so far that they are broken for good. But they continue to display the pious Tartuffish[78] veneer of a monastic, but their private lives are more abandoned and abundant than the average precept-keeping lay person.

Kāsāva,kaṇṭhā bahavo	Many with the saffron robe on their necks,	
pāpa,dhammā asaññatā	are unrestrained in evil things:	
pāpā pāpehi kammehi	the evil, on account of their evil deeds,	
nirayaṁ te upapajjare	are reborn in hell [suffering state].	Dh 307[79]

[74] Comy to **Mahā Suññata S** (M 122) explains the pains of violating the holy life by using two analogies. For a religious teacher or student outside the Teaching (a non-Buddhist) to fall from his training, only falls away from a mundane training—like one falling a donkey and is only covered in dust. However, for one who violates the holy life training in the Teaching (with its path, fruit and nirvana), that is, consciously violates the precepts, it is a great loss, like one falling from an elephant, incurring great karmic suffering. (MA 4:165)

[75] It should also be noted however that martial arts have a close connection with Chan meditation, esp at the Shaolin Temple in China.

[76] See **Group karma** = SD 39.1(7.3.2).

[77] On the psychology of giving, see **(Aṭṭha) Dāna S 1-2** (A 8.31-32/4:236) = SD 6.6.

[78] From *Tartuffe,* a comedy by the famous French playwright Molière. Tartuffe is an astute religious hypocrite and conman in the cloth: see SD 19.2a(2.3.2).

[79] See also Dh 311-313.

The problem of the real "fake monks" can only be overcome with the inner stillness and clear vision of true reality. Fake monks thrive on our belief that goodness is found in externalities: when we judge goods by their brands without personally trying them out. The more we understand the Dharma and the more we practise it, the less fakeness is likely to be found in such monastics. Our greed, hate and delusion —our expectations, the measuring of others, and superstitions—feed the fakeness and encourage it in the weaker monastics. The more true practitioners there are, the less fake monks there will be. The brighter the light, the less the shadows, and if there are dark objects in the way, their shadows will be darkest and easily spotted, so that we can avoid them.[80]

6.4 CAREER MONASTICS. Despite some Buddhists' championing of Buddhism's universality and compassion, there are clear signs of tribalism in some Buddhist communities. **HL Seneviratne**, for example, criticizes Walpola Rāhula,[81] who in *The History of Buddhism in Ceylon* (1956) and *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu* (1974) advocates a Buddhism that "glorifies social intercourse with lay society…the receipt of salaries and other forms of material remuneration; militancy in politics; and violence, war and the spilling of blood in the name of 'preserving the religion'" (1999:186).

Practising Buddhists like the forest monk, **Ajahn Sujato**, of Ajahn Chah's lineage, however, are more concerned regarding the damage that such developments bring to Buddhism. In his thought-provoking study *History of Mindfulness,* Sujato notes:[82]

> The purity of the Pali canon is intrinsic to the Sinhalese religious, cultural, and racial identity. Much of the Sri Lankan monastic Sangha openly supports and justifies bloody warfare in defence of the exalted ideal of Sri Lanka as the upholder of the pristine Dhamma. One of the prime advocates of monastic laxity in Vinaya and involvement in politics was the scholar Walpola Rahula… Like so many others, my introduction to Buddhism was through *What the Buddha Taught*. I remember being moved to tears, especially, by his glowing account of the greatest renouncer of war in political history, King Asoka.
>
> However, although I have not seen it recorded that Rahula ever followed the Buddha's instructions and meditated, he certainly followed his own advice and embroiled the Sangha in sectarian, racist, and violent politics. Learning of the vast gulf between theory and practice in Rahula's own life, I cannot help but feel a deep sense of betrayal and shame for the Sangha.
>
> Like the fetishistic usage of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the roots of this development may be traced to the ancient chronicles. Evaluation of the textual sources never happens in a historical vacuum. No doubt my work will be seen in certain quarters as an attack on Sri Lankan national pride, and will be criticized accordingly. What can I say? I have so much love for Sinhalese people and so much respect for their preservation of the Dhamma that it pains me to see such things, and pains me even more to speak about them; but the Dhamma cannot survive unless we Buddhists are capable of genuine self-examination. (Sujato 2004b:217 f)

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[80] See also **Money and Monastics** = SD 19 esp (10.1).

[81] On **Walpola Rahula**, see also SJ Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992: 22-29 (ch 5). Tambiah notes that "…in the 1950s, when he [Rahula] conducted his research in Paris in association with Professor Demiéville, he devised a distinctive clothing of trousers and cap to withstand the cold and sometimes relaxed the rule regarding meals, thereby again demonstrating that he would not allow conventional rules to obstruct the pursuit of more worthwhile and serious goals" (1992:24). Speaking of freelance adjustments of monastic rules, one might add here the peculiar habit amongst some young (and not so young) Theravāda monks of keeping their head unshaven and thick with hair so that they look like laymen. The Vinaya rule says: "Monks, long hair should not be worn. Whoever should wear it long, there is an offence of wrong-doing (*dukkaṭa*). I allow it to be of two months' growth or two fingers' breadth long." (Cv 5.2.2 = V 2:106). Could this be that there is a tacit acquiescence to the abrogation of the "lesser and minor rules" despite the ruling of the Rājagaha Council? In which case, could such monks regard themselves as part of the Theravada monastic community?

[82] See **The Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas** = SD 13.1(1.12c).

In another study, *Sects and Sectarianism*, Sujato notes how the various post-Buddha schools began to retell historical accounts in their *vaṁsa* (chronicle) literature,[83] modifying or adding whatever details that would "establish an exclusive mythos" for themselves (2006:11).

6.5 ATOMIZED BUDDHISM. If the mediaeval period of communal Theravada is characterized by the rewriting of Buddhist history to legitimize themselves, the urban groups of communal Buddhists today have effectively placed personal charisma and routinization of religiosity above the Buddha Dharma. By "**charisma**" here is meant that the success of such a group is largely dependent on the *person* of the teacher or leader (rather than an inspiration of the Dharma). By "**routinization of religiosity**" is meant that "Buddhist" activities are measured and promoted for their economic viability, that is, how *many* people and how *much* money they can bring to the group (rather than the Dharma-inspired joy of spiritual study, practice and fellowship).

The most routinized activities today are *ritualized meditation* and *academic Buddhism*. Every ambitious Buddhist centre would list "**meditation**" as one of its main public activities, and some even use "meditation" in their official names, but the word is not the thing. And where "meditation" is actually taught in such places, the motive is often unclear, the quality often questionable. Indeed, meditation has become a *ritual* rather than right mindfulness. Meditation has become a marketable and lucrative product for money Buddhism.[84]

Since the rise of the Mahāvihāra tradition in Sri Lanka, **academic Buddhism** has overshadowed the living Buddha Dharma as "mainstream" Buddhism. One obvious reason for this is that it is easier to *measure* academic Buddhism than Buddhist spirituality. Understandably, monastics with academic titles or laity with academic Buddhist titles tend to attract respect and legitimacy. Understandably, in the piety of the less informed mind, whoever has a "Dr" to his name must know everything, including Buddhism.

As for such scholars themselves, it is understandable that some of them might feel that they stand out like sore thumbs in the madding crowd of half-informed Buddhists, bedazzled by their title rather than seeking to see the light. Could this be why such titled Buddhist academics almost never meet in open dialogue except within their own private circles?

The situation is such that every Buddhist centre is now itself *a very private limited Buddhism*—veritable "I-pods"[85]—existing, as it were, in denial of other groups. Indra's net of jewels is rent and bereft of its jewels, only individual tight knots remain afloat here and there in the dead vacuum of Buddhist space. We are living in the virtual reality of **atomized Buddhism**. We need to re-gather and clean the jewels of their grime and return them to their rightful places so that they will shine their natural goodness together again.

The tenets of Buddhist tribalism in our communities[86] may not be as clearly defined in our society's constitutions or house rules as those of the sectarian evangelical churches, but our parochial loyalty to the group is no different. This intolerance, albeit a tacit one, is especially severe where we, the sectarians, regard only *our teacher* or *our teaching* is right, and everyone else wrong. The teacher has been placed above the Teaching. To many, since the Buddha is dead but forget his last instructions, the only the words they seem hear are those of their esteemed perfect gurus.

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[83] Such as **Śāriputra,paripṛcchā** of the Mahāsaṅghika and **Dīpa,vaṁsa** of the Mahāvihāra tradition (Sujato 2006:9-12).

[84] On a positive note, in urban Singapore, for example, right livelihood companies or projects run by the laity offer public meditation courses and even meditation therapy for a fee, with which the teachers support themselves so that they can work as full time Dharma workers.

[85] From "iPod," a brand of portable media players designed and marketed by Apple Inc. launched in 2001, but here spelt "I-pod," meaning an exclusive, often intolerant, self-promoting bubble of activity usually centering around a dominant figure.

[86] I am here referring to indigenous Buddhist (like those of Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand), migrant Buddhists and local "consumer" Buddhists who rely on teachers and teachings from such traditions. The "consumer" Buddhists, like those who look up to imported goods as symbols of quality and status, are generally attracted to foreign Buddhist sects and teachers, consciously or unconsciously for the same reasons. However, the wrong here is not in the attraction, but in the emotional dependence on teachers, and the lack of self-reliant spiritual practice and fellowship amongst local Buddhists.

Asataṁ bhāvanam iccheyya	The fool would wish for false glory,	
purekkhāraṅ ca bhikkhusu	and for precedence amongst the monks,	
āvāsesu ca issariyaṁ	and for lordship in the monasteries,	
pūjā para,kulesu ca	and honour from other families.	Dh 73
Mam eva kata maññantu	"'By me is this done!'	
gihī pabbajitā ubho	let both householders and renunciants think,	
mam ev'ativasā assu	'Let them be subjected to me,	
kiccâkiccesu kismici	in whatever that is done, great or small!'"	
iti bālassa saṅkappo	thus is the fool's thought—	
icchā māno ca vaḍḍhati	so desire and conceit increase.	(Dh 74)

Indeed, if the Teaching is given first priority, there is less likelihood for such personality cults and guru devotion.[87]

7 The Buddha's challenge

7.1 WHO IS A "BUDDHIST"? There were no concepts of "Buddhist" during the Buddha's time and in the after-centuries. The notion of "**statistical Buddhist**" probably arose with communal politics and secular administration.[88] There was also no concept of a "**nominal Buddhist**." There are only three categories of those who understand and practise the Buddha's teachings, that is,

(1) the good worldlings (*kalyāṇa puthujjana*),[89] or those capable of keeping to the Buddhist training;
(2) the learners (*sekha*),[90] the saint (ordained and lay) on the path to awakening; and
(3) the non-learners (*asekha*) or arhats, who have fully attained to the goal of awakening.

The minimum standard for a "Buddhist" is that of being a stream-winner (*sotāpanna*), or at least, the effective aspiration to be one.[91]

The concept of a "statistical" religionist is commonly applied today for administrative purposes by governments, and for strategic and economic purposes by organized religions. It is also common for many who are attracted to Buddhist teachings to label themselves as "nominal Buddhist," or to practise in the silent anonymity as "crypto-Buddhists." And of course there are many who use Buddhist meditation for their own purposes. This clearly reflects the effectiveness and attractiveness of Buddhist teachings and methods of mental health and happiness, despite its non-aggressive missionary methods.

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[87] **David Bubna-Litic & Winton Higgins** (2007), both Australian practitioners and scholars, have done a very instructive survey of sectarian and "meditation" politics, and gender bias in contemporary Australian Buddhism. "The authors are both veteran *dharma* practitioners…[who have had] active engagement in Zen, Theravadin and insight groups on the Australian eastern seaboard over the last two decades" (2007:158 f).

[88] A good example of statistical Buddhism is found during the Tokugawa period of Japanese history (from 1630s onwards), when the shogun introduced a mandatory system known as ***danka*** (fr Skt *dāna,pati*, lit "master giver," ie "lay supporter" and *ka* Jap for "house"), whereby all Japanese had to register periodically at the local Buddhist temple. A *danka* identified a family that requested a particular Buddhist temple to conduct all its funeral, memorial, and other services in exchange for which it offered remuneration and partial provision for the upkeep of the temple. And there was also the ***terauke*** (temple guarantee) system to seek out the adherents of the proscribed Christianity faith, but it had a wider effect of the surveillance of the entire population. A certificate of affiliation with a Buddhist temple was required as proof that a suspect was not a Christian. This was a period when Christian colonialism was rising in Asia, and the Japanese had the foresight to prevent it from encroaching on their soil. See Piya Tan, "Buddhism in Japan," 2004: see http://pali.house.googlepages.com/HOB5_Japan.pdf.

[89] Comys often qu an untraced ref: "The Buddha, the Kinsman of the Sun, speaks of these two worldlings: one is the blind worldling, the other the good worldling" (*Duve puthujjanā vuttā Buddhena Ādicca,bandhunā andho puthujjano eko kalyāṇ'eko puthujjano ti*): DA 59 = MA 1:21 = SA 2:97 = AA 1:62 = Nm 2:273 = Nc 76 = PmA 1:205 = 266. See also: MA 1:40; ItA 1:61; UA 269,29 = ItA 2:35,13.

[90] On *kalyāṇa,puthujjana, sekha* & *asekha,* see **Indriya,bhāvanā S** (M 12) = SD 17.13.

[91] See **Entering the Stream** = SD 3.3 & **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1) = SD 16.7.

In the context of our study of the nature of identity, it is useful to examine another term, that is, ***puthujjana*** or "worldling," which refers to anyone who is unawakened. The early Suttas often mention two kinds of people in terms of teachings:

(1) the instructed noble disciple (*sutavā ariya,sāvaka*), and

(2) the uninstructed worldling (*assutavā puthujjana*).

The first refers to what we might today term as "true Buddhists," that is, the good worldlings, the learners and the arhats. Here, however, it is the uninstructed worldling that concern us.

According to the Commentaries,[92] "**uninstructed**" (*assutavā*) means devoid of learning, questioning and discriminating regarding the aggregates, the elements, the sense-bases, conditionality, the focusses of mindfulness, and so on. The term *assutavā* (from *na*, "not" + *sutavā,* "one who had heard") literally means "one who has not heard (the teaching)," that is, one who is ignorant of the teachings, or who has not heard enough for any effective spiritual growth. The antonym for *assutavā* is *bahu-s,suta* ("heard much"),[93] that is, "well-instructed, wise," and its noun is *bāhu,sacca* ("deep knowledge, vast learning").[94]

Buddhaghosa, in his Saṁyutta Commentary, explains "**worldling**" (*puthujjana*) as a "many-being"[95] because of his generating numerous and diverse defilements, etc.[96] It is also because he is included amongst the masses (*puthūnaṁ janānaṁ anto,gadhattā*), in a number beyond reckoning, who are engaged in a low Dharma and conduct, contrary to the Dharma of the noble ones.[97] Or else, *puthu* means "reckoned as separate": the worldling is one separated from the noble ones, who possess such qualities as moral virtue, learning, etc.[98] (SA 2:97 f)[99]

Understandably a "**blind worldling**" (*andha,puthujjana*), easily reacts to worldly conditions with suffering. The Udāna Commentary (by **Dhamma,pāla**) quotes an untraced Sutta reference that defines the "blind worldling," thus: "The uninstructed worldling, bhikshus, on being touched by various kinds of painful state, grieves, suffers, laments, wails, beats the breast, falls into confusion."[100] (UA 166). The blind worldling's prolonged and repeated suffering arises from his identifying with his body (*sakkāya,-diṭṭhi*). Such an identification prevents us from seeing beyond the physical being, and as such we are limited by our physical senses.

To be a Buddhist, then, is to be able *to see beyond how we define ourselves*. This openness allows our minds to extend the consciousness beyond the externals of person, things, and ideas, and above all beyond self-limiting views. It is to be able to see beyond the conditioned and man-made aspects of society, religion and language, to the natural truths of reality, and so be spiritually liberated.[101]

7.2 ANYONE CAN PRACTISE BUDDHISM. Although Buddhism is the world's first *missionary* religion, it is not an evangelical one. That is, traditionally, Buddhist teachers only teach the Dharma when invited to do so, or when the audience is ready, because something so vitally liberating as the Dharma is best learned with a right attitude of *respect* (meaning wise attention) and *readiness* (meaning a still and open mind). A Dharma-spirited Buddhist generally instills faith in others, not so much by clever argu-

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[92] Eg MA 1:20 f; SA 2:97; AA 1:63 (def of *sutavā,* etc); UA 166.

[93] V 2:95; D 1:93, 137, 3:259; A 1:24, 2:22, 147. 170, 178, 3:114; Sn 58 & Nc 457; It 60, 80; Tha 1026; Dh 208; J 1:93, 199.

[94] *Sacca* here is cognate of Skt *śrautya,* fr √śru (to hear): V 3:10; M 1:445; A 1:38, 2:218; Kh 5.1/3; Dh 271; Vv 63.9.

[95] Bodhi at S:B 769 n153.

[96] *Puthūnaṁ nāna-p,pakārānaṁ kiles'ādinaṁ janan'ādi,kāraṇehi puthujjano.*

[97] *Api ca puthūnaṁ gaṇana,pathamam-atītānaṁ ariya,dhamma,parammukhānaṁ nīca,dhamma,samācārānaṁ janānaṁ antogadhanattâpi puthujjano.*

[98] *Puthu vā ayaṁ visuṁ yeva saṅkhaṁ gato: visaṁsaṭṭho sīla,sut'ādiguṇa,yuttehi ariyehi jano ti puthujjano.*

[99] This twofold etym is based on the Pali ***puthu*** as cognate with either Vedic *pṛthu* ("numerous, many"), or with *pṛthak* ("separate, distinct"). BHS *pṛthagjana* shows derivation from Skt *pṛthak*, while the Pali Comys generally follow Skt *pṛthu.* See S:B 769 n153.

[100] *Assutavā bhikkhave puthujjano aññatar'aññatarena dukkha,dhammena phuṭṭho samāno socati kilamati paridevati urattāliṁ kandati sammohaṁ āpajjatî ti.*

[101] See further, **Skillful Means** = SD 30.8.

ments of doctrine nor by fear, but by a calm and joyful personality. A classic case is that of Sāriputta's conversion on meeting Assaji.[102]

Even in the face of an aggressive challenge, the Buddha would respond with remarkable calm and insight by addressing the challenger in his own terms. In the classic text on *interfaith dialogue*, **the Udumbarikā Sīhanāda Sutta** (D 25), the Buddha, when challenged by the wanderer Nigrodha (who boasts that he "will baffle him [the Buddha] with a single question, we will knock him over like an empty pot!"), replies by discussing the matter in terms of the challenger's viewpoint, and concludes with this lion-roar:

> …let an intelligent man come to me, who is honest, trustworthy, upright, and I will instruct him, I will teach him the Dharma. If he practises what he is taught, then, within just seven days, he can attain the goal.[103]
>
> Nigrodha, you may think, 'The recluse Gotama says this out of desire to win disciples.' But you should not think so. Let whoever is your teacher remain as your teacher.
>
> Nigrodha, you may think, 'The recluse Gotama says this out of desire to make us fall from our rules.'… Let your training remain as your training.
>
> Nigrodha, you may think, 'The recluse Gotama says this out of desire to make us fall from our livelihood… Let your livelihood remain as your livelihood.
>
> Nigrodha, you may think, 'The recluse Gotama says this with the desire to establish us in the unwholesome things along with teachings considered unwholesome.'… Let what you consider unwholesome continue to be so considered.
>
> Nigrodha, you may think, 'The recluse Gotama says this with the desire to separate us from the wholesome things along with teachings considered wholesome.'… Let what you consider wholesome continue to be so considered.
>
> —I do not speak for any of these reasons.
>
> There are, Nigrodha, *unwholesome things that have not been abandoned, defiled, conducive to rebirth, fearful, productive of painful results in future, associated with birth, decay and death*. It is for the abandonment of these things that I teach Dharma.[104]
>
> If you practise accordingly, these defiled things will be abandoned…and by your own insight and realization, you will attain the fullness of wisdom." (D 25.23 f/3:56 f) = SD 1.4

In the Udumbarikā Sīhanāda Sutta, the Buddha makes seven important statements which are worth pondering over so that we understand their significance especially in connection with Buddhist missiology, that is, the systematic propagation of the the Buddha Word:

(1) "Let whoever is your teacher (*ācariya*) remain as your teacher."
(2) "Let your training (*uddesa*) remain as your training."
(3) "Let your livelihood (*ājīva*) remain as your livelihood."
(4) "Let what you consider unwholesome (*akusala*) continue to be so considered."
(5) "Let what you consider wholesome (*kusala*) continue to be so considered."
(6) "There are unabandoned unwholesome states that conduce to rebirth and future suffering."
(7) "By your own insight and realization, you will attain the fullness of wisdom."

7.3 THE BUDDHA'S CHALLENGE. Let me comment on each of these seven points [7.2] as I understand them to be so in the Buddha's time, and in a manner applicable to our own times.[105]

(1) "**Let whoever is your teacher remain as your teacher**" means that *we can keep to our religious discipleship or religious training*. That is, we need not give up our religion to practise the Buddha's

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[102] See Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples,* 2004 §11.

[103] Similar statement found in **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22.22) and **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.46).

[104] *Santi ca kho Nigrodha, akusalā dhammā appahīṇā saṅkilesikā ponobhavikā sadarā dukkha,vipākā āyatiṁ jāti,jarā,maraṇiyā, yesâhaṁ pahānāya dhammaṁ desemi yathā paṭipannānaṁ vo saṅkilesikā dhammā pahīyissanti.*

[105] In **Udumbarikā Sīhanāda S** (D 25) Intro (2), I commented on these as key principles of **Buddhist missiology** (D 25 = SD 1.4).

teachings. Even after some followers of other religions converted to Buddhism, the Buddha encouraged them to continue to respect and even support their erstwhile teachers. The best known case is that of the householder Upāli of Nālandā, ex-follower of the Jain teacher, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta. The Buddha admonishes him, "Householder, long indeed has your family supported the Nirgranthas, and please consider that almsfood should still be given to them when they come."[106]

(2) "**Let your training remain as your training**" means that *we can continue keeping to the training or discipline that we have been observing, or are used to*, while we are practising the Buddha's teachings. The Buddha is not interested in religious identities, or parallels, or similarities, especially where *language* (words, thoughts and expression) is the basis of such systems. There are moral and spiritual issues that we will realize that are beyond our comprehension and capacity to resolve: only spiritual liberation can transcend such worldly limitations.

(3) "**Let your livelihood remain as your livelihood**" means that *we do not need to give up our occupation or means of supporting ourselves* while allowing the Buddha's teaching be an important part of our lives. We need some kind of suitable livelihood to support ourselves and others. The more conducive our livelihood is for spiritual development, the easier it is for us to understand the true purpose and efficacy of the Buddha Dharma. Often enough, the light of the Buddha's truth is so penetrating that we begin to see through our own lifestyles, and realize what to do about it to take that next step up the spiral path to spiritual liberation.

(4) "**Let what you consider unwholesome continue to be so considered**" means that *we need not change our opinions regarding what is evil*. Our understanding of what is evil or unwholesome is often based on our past pains and present circumstances. When we begin to see the universality of such pain and lack, as the Buddha himself has experienced them, we begin to connect to a larger reality, so that our pains mature into compassion and our confusion into wisdom. We then begin to see evil as those unwholesome states that hinder us from spiritual growth.

(5) "**Let what you consider wholesome continue to be so considered**" means that *we need not change our opinions regarding what is good*. Whatever notion of good or wholesome that we may have, understandably reflects our own understanding of self and the world. As we reflect on the profound teachings of the Buddha, our understanding will mature into a vision of true reality. We then begin to see good as those wholesome states that conduce to spiritual liberation.

Religion, education, profession, philosophies and moral virtue—that is, the above five—are all secondary to spiritual development. We can have all these five things at their best, but we may still lack spiritual wisdom and liberation. Indeed, these are the very things that could be holding us back from being better than what we think we are. How often these self-limiting systems are actually the result of *comparing* ourselves with others, and of defining happiness as *having* things (wealth, status, power, pleasure), rather than of truly *being* happy.

(6) ***There are unabandoned unwholesome states that conduce to rebirth and future suffering***. In other words, there is a piece is still missing from our lives' puzzle, a vital piece that often eludes us as we are distracted by the religion of words, wealth, status, power, and pleasure. How often we are goaded on mostly by the fear of loss, the promise of power, the comfort of other-love, or the feeling of pleasure. All that we have really achieved is only a desperate sense of a very private limited self-fulfillment.

Even after having gained all this, we may find that the costs are very high and we are still utterly hollow and other-dependent. We wish for some inner stillness, but find ourselves again and again caught up by the storm around us. Sometimes we think we have found something strong and meaningful to hold on to, but the force of the storm is too strong, and we get sucked back into the maddening maelstrom again. This seems to be endless.

(7) "***By your own insight and realization, you will attain the fullness of wisdom***." We are not able to realize our true goodness, especially when we are always seeking to share the limelight of the perceived success of others. Like moths, we mistake a candle for the sun, but the candle still burns and kills. Un-

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[106] *Dīgha,rattaṁ kho te gah,apati nigaṇṭhānaṁ opāna,bhūtaṃ kulaṁ, yena nesaṁ upagatānaṁ piṇḍakaṁ dātabbaṁ maññeyyāsî ti.* See **Upālī S** (M 56.17/1:379) = SD 27.1.

like Prometheus,[107] who is punished for bringing fire into the world, we punish ourselves by being burned again and again, Sisyphus-like,[108] by trying to grasp the flames or to steal them for our own. In doing so, we fail to see that its generous light has actually revealed the path on which we should walk. Again and again we are burned, and pained moment after moment, life after life. It is all so boringly familiar.

In the dazzling lights of worldly success, we see our shadows cast darkly and lowly on the ground. Our shadows are darkest when the lights are brightest. But these are the lights of others, and the shadows are false, they are not really us. When we look within, we truly see that the brightest light is there, ready to shine out from our hearts when the mind's hindrances are removed. This light casts no shadow, for it is the light of true reality.

> The root of what is reckoned as proliferation, says the Blessed One,
> the thought "I am," all that he would put to a stop.
> Whatever cravings there are in him,
> Always mindful, let him train to push them away. (Tuvaṭaka Sutta, Sn 916)

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[107] Promethus, see SD 23.3 Intro fn.
[108] Sisyphus, see SD 23.3 Intro fn.

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051003; 070728; (recovered from crash) 070823; 081218